

CLAIMS**What is claimed is:**

- 5 1. A computer-based Internet bargaining system, comprising:
 - a. a processor;
 - b. a network interface;
 - c. a memory, data storage device;
 - 10 d. an operating system;
 - e. a database management system;
 - f. a database; and
 - g. said system having a high bandwidth connection to the Internet.
- 15 2. A system as recited by claim 1, being configured to act as a web-server communicating with buyers and sellers using a communication mode selected from the group consisting of on-line, off-line and real-time.
3. A system as recited by claim 1, being further configured to process requests from buyers and/or sellers.
4. A system as recited by claim 1, being further configured to store data related to
20 buyers and sellers, transactions, responses, bargain prices, and bargain deals for use in connection with database operations.
5. A system as recited by claim 1, being further configured to have an interface that provides means enabling buyers and sellers to access the products and/or services available through the system for sale.
- 25 6. A system as recited by claim 5, being further configured to enable buyers and sellers to input data related to a bargaining process.

7. A system as recited by claim 1, being further configured to be implemented on a distributed network.

8. A system as recited by claim 7, wherein said distributed network comprises the Internet and said interface comprises a Web browser.

5 9. A system as recited by 7, wherein said system further comprises a program for:

a. enabling buyers to register by agreeing to the terms and conditions of the system;

b. enabling buyers to submit a buyer profile containing preselected information about said buyers; and

10 c. enabling buyers to login to the system and bargain for goods and/or services.

10. A system as recited by claim 9, wherein said system program is further configured to issue a unique membership identification and password to said buyers and to sellers registering with the system.

11. A system as recited by claim 1, further configured to register users by:

15 a. asking for their profile and preselected information about said users;

b. storing said profile and said preselected information in a secure database; and

c. issuing to buyer and seller a unique membership identification number.

12. A system as recited by claim 9, wherein said system program is configured to authenticate the buyer and/or seller to use the service provided by the system program.

20 13. A system as recited by claim 9, wherein said system program is further configured to let the buyers or sellers register themselves at no cost or for a predetermined fee.

14. A system as recited by claim 1, wherein said system program is configured to provide buyer with preselected product information, including a list comprising products

available for purchase through said system, product prices, and relative information concerning products, said preselected product information being provided after buyer logs on to the system by inputting buyer's membership ID and password.

15. A system as recited by claim 1, wherein said system program is further configured to
5 receive from a remote buyer, a purchase request comprising: (a) a purchase offer; and (b) a payment identifier specifying a financial account from which funds are appointed to be paid for purchase of a product or service under conditions meeting buyer requirements.

16. A system as recited by claim 1, wherein said program is further configured to initiate
10 the use of financial account to effect said payment from said buyer.

17. A system as recited by claim 1, wherein said system program is further configured to
receive payment from said buyer through an electronic settlement system and said settlement system comprises electronic fund transfer, digital cash, electronic cash and a credit card system selected from the group consisting of credit card and debit card.

15 18. A system as recited by claim 9, wherein said purchase offer from said buyer comprises information elements, including product quantity, product quality, purchase date, purchase price, payment terms, date of delivery, pick-up location and delivery location of said product or services.

19. A system as recited by claim 18, wherein said system program is further configured
20 to notify said buyer that said purchase offer is accepted and buyer has entered into a legally binding contract with said system.

20. A system as recited by claim 18, wherein said system program is further configured to generate a bargain price response to said buyer purchase offer and transmit said bargain price response to said buyer.

21. A system as recited by claim 20, wherein said bargain price response includes an expiration date, and notification that said bargain price is revocable by the system at any time prior to said expiration date.
22. A system as recited by claim 18, wherein said system bargain offer includes
5 notification that said offer expires if it is not accepted within a predetermined time period, and that said offer can be withdrawn by the system without notice prior to expiration of said preselected time period.
23. A system as recited by 18, wherein said buyer has a right to withdraw said bargain offer after acceptance by said system, provided that said buyer pays a specified
10 penalty to said system.
24. A system as recited by claim 18, wherein said system program is further configured to notify said buyer that said bargain offer has lapsed in the event that said bargain offer expires without acceptance.
25. A system as recited by claim 18, wherein said system program is further configured
15 to collect payment for the purchase from the buyer.
26. A system as recited by claim 18, wherein said system program is further configured to place payment collected from the buyer in an escrow account.
27. A system as recited by claim 18, wherein said system program is further configured to notify seller about the sale of seller's product.
28. A system as recited by claim 18, wherein said system program is further configured
20 to transfer payment to the seller.
29. A system as recited by claim 1, wherein said system is further configured to communicate with the buyer without identifying the seller.

30. A system as recited by claim 1, being configured to communicate with the seller without identifying the buyer.
31. In a system for electronically making a binding contract between a buyer and a seller, the improvement comprising the steps of;
- 5 (a) receiving a purchase offer from said buyer containing a buyer request and a buyer payment identifier specifying a financial account from which funds may be paid for a purchase meeting criteria set by the buyer; and
- (b) notifying said buyer concerning acceptance or rejection of said purchase offer.
32. A system as recited by claim 31, being further configured to receive payment through a credit card.
- 10 33. A system as recited by claim 31, being further configured to initiate use of said financial account to effect payment of said funds from buyer.
34. A system as recited by claim 31, wherein said purchase comprises plural buyer request elements, including product quantity, product quality, purchase date, purchase price, payment terms, date of delivery, pick-up location and delivery
- 15 location of said product or services.
35. A system as recited by claim 1 having a processor for processing the sale of a product, comprising:
- a. a common port for obtaining a purchase offer for said product from said
- 20 buyer and a payment identifier from which payment for the product may be made;
- b. said processor being configured to present said buyer with a plurality of available products; and

c. said buyer being enabled by said system to bargain for at least one product selection.

36. A system as recited by claim 35, being configured to provide a channel of communication between said buyer and said seller without revealing their identities.

5 37. A system as recited by claim 35, which provides incentives to the buyer for making said product selection.

38. A system as recited by claim 35, which is operative to bargain for said product selected by said buyer during a bargaining process adapted to arrive at an acceptable bargain price.

10 39. A system as recited by claim 35, wherein said processor, after accepting said bargain price, notifies said buyer about the acceptance and draws payment for said product from said payment identifier.

40. A system as recited by claim 1 for processing the sale of a package of component items, comprising a communications port for receiving a purchase offer from a buyer containing product requirements for each of said component items of said package and a bargain price for said package.

15 41. A system as recited by claim 40, wherein said processor is further configured to:

- a. disassemble said package purchase offer into a plurality of component items;
- b. determine for each of the component items whether a bargain offer can be
- 20 accepted or rejected; and
- c. bind said buyer to purchase said package if the system accepts said bargain price for the package.

42. A system as recited by claim 40, wherein said processor is configured to receive a purchase offer for each component item of said package.

43. A system as recited by claim 40, wherein said processor initiates use of a payment identifier to collect funds upon acceptance of a bargain offer.
44. A system as recited by claim 40, wherein each component item of said package has a price based on the percentage of the market value of said component item to total
5 market value of all component items in said package.
45. A system as recited by claim 40, wherein a bargain offer response for each component item in said package and a bargain price for said package is generated by said system and sent to said buyer with notice that buyer acceptance must be effected during a preselected time period.
- 10 46. A system as recited by claim 45, wherein said bargain offer response generated by said system includes a total price, and a portion of said total price is reserved as a margin.
47. A system as recited by claim 45, wherein said processor decreases the price of one or more component items of said package, or decreases the price of said package,
15 thereby generating a new bargain offer response that is more acceptable to the buyer.
48. A system as recited by claim 45, in which said processor decreases the price of at least one component of said package, or decreases the price of said package without disclosing the price reduction of the component items in said package, thereby accruing a new counter bargain offer which is more acceptable to said buyer and said
20 system.
49. A system as recited by claim 45, wherein said buyer is bound to purchase said package of component items if said bargain price is accepted by said system, and said price of said component items is not disclosed to said buyer.

50. A system for using a computer to facilitate a transaction between a buyer and one of a plurality of sellers, comprising:

- a. inputting into said computer a purchase offer which includes information about the product;
- b. inputting into said computer a bargain offer which includes an offer price;
- c. inputting into said computer a payment mode identifier associated with said bargain offer; and
- d. transmitting each of said purchase offer, said bargain offer and said payment mode identifier to said system.

51. In a system having a computer which receives a bargain offer containing a price offered by a buyer for a product, the improvement wherein a processor performs steps which comprise:

- a. validating said bargain offer;
- b. determining availability of said product; and
- c. storing information concerning bargain offer validity and said product in a database.

52. A system as recited by claim 50, being operative to generate an acknowledgement response for the bargain offer received from the buyer, said offer being assessed by said system to determine the validity thereof in accordance with the following criteria: (a) said bargain offer for said product has expired; (b) said product is unavailable; and (c) a predetermined amount is not available in the payment mode identifier.

53. A system for processing the sale and purchase of items, comprising:

- a. a storage device;

- b. a processor;
- c. said storage device being operative to store programs for controlling said processor, and said processor being operative with said program to receive bargain offers from said buyer, including conditions for purchase and a payment identifier, thereby defining said bargain offer.

54. A system as recited by claim 53, further configured to receive bargain offers from said sellers, including conditions for sale of said product, details about said product, a seller price for said product and a payment identifier specifying mode of payment.
55. A system as recited by claim 53, wherein said processor has a processing program operative to query each buyer to obtain therefrom a unique member ID and password, for use in identifying a buyer from which a bargain offer is received.
56. A system as recited by claim 53, wherein said processor has a processing program operative to query each seller to obtain therefrom a unique member ID and password, for use in identifying a seller from which a bargain offer is received.
57. A system as recited by claim 53, further configured to verify the legitimacy / authenticity / condition of said product and the pricing of products listed by the seller, said verification comprising the steps of:
 - a. obtaining issuance of an Authenticity certificate from an authorized appraiser;
 - b. obtaining a Price evaluation from said authorized appraiser;
 - c. checking product certification at the time of pick-up or delivery; and
 - d. checking condition of said product at the time of pickup and/or delivery.
58. A system as recited by claim 57, further configured to permit the product to be evaluated and appraised by an authorized appraiser nominated by the system.

59. A system as recited by claim 57, further configured to permit the seller to pay the cost of evaluation, so that the cost is not included in the price of the product.
60. A system as recited by claim 57, further configured to permit the cost of evaluation to be paid by the system to its nominated appraiser so that the cost is included in the price of the product.
61. A system as recited by claim 57, further configured to (a) initiate legal action against a seller that fails to produce said product at time of pick-up, said legal action seeking redress in the form of legal remedies, including a court order preventing payment to seller; (b) charge seller a predetermined penalty, as specified in said registration agreement; or (c) cancel seller's registration, as specified in said registration agreement
62. A system as recited by claim 57, further configured to provide for agreement between said buyer and said seller at time of registration permitting said system to stop payment to the seller for sale of said product if seller fails to produce said authentication certificate or produces a false certificate at time of pick-up.
63. A system as recited by claim 57, wherein said processor is further operative with said processing program to validate a received bargain offer signal from said buyer and/or seller and thereby determine whether said received offer signal meets predetermined validation criteria.
64. A system as recited by claim 63, wherein said processor is further operative with the program to process said received bargain offer from said buyer and/or seller, only if said step of validation determines that said received bargain offer meets predetermined criteria.
65. A system as recited by claim 63, wherein said processor is further configured to start the bargain process by generating bargain prices for said buyer and said seller

continuously, until a point is reached where (a) an acceptable price is arrived at, or
 (b) said buyer or said seller stop bargaining; or (c) said product becomes unavailable;
 or (d) said bargain price generated by said system reaches its limit; or (e) said buyer
 or said seller runs out of bonus chances or does not request additional chances; or (f)
 said predetermined time period allotted for bargaining has expired.

66. A system as recited by claim 65, wherein said processor is further operative with said
 program to stop the bargaining process in response to a request from buyer and/or
 seller without charging any penalty or fees.

67. A system as recited by claim 65, wherein the processor is further operative with the
 program to accept the bargaining offer containing a price offer by said buyer or said
 seller after validating that the offer meets predetermined criteria.

68. A system as recited by claim 65, wherein the processor is further operative with the
 program to process an acceptance received from the buyer after validating that said
 bargain offer meets predetermined criteria, and store said bargain offer in said
 database.

69. A system as recited by claim 65, wherein the processor is further operative with the
 program to transmit a notification to the buyer, which notification indicates that
 buyer's bargain offer is less than certain minimum predetermined offer criteria and
 asks said buyer to send another bargain offer, or quit the bargaining process, or to
 follow a bargaining recommendation provided by a "Bargain Guru".

70. A system as recited by claim 65, further configured to permit buyer to request free
 chances, buy more chances at a predetermined chance purchase price, or redeem
 purchase points to buy more chances to bargain after the system program has stopped
 bargaining for a particular product or service.

71. A system as recited by claim 70, further configured to permit buyer and/or seller to use at least one bargain chance provided by the system to continue bargaining until all chances issued to buyer and seller have been used or a bargain price is accepted.
72. A system as recited by claim 70, further configured to permit buyer to use one or
5 more bargain chances provided by the system to continue bargaining until all chances issued to buyer have been used, said buyer having an election to (a) request free chances; or (b) to purchase additional chances for a predetermined chance purchase price, or (c) to redeem purchase points applicable toward purchase of additional chances, or (d) to accept the system bargain price, or (e) to follow a purchase
10 recommendation provided by a "Bargain Guru".
73. A system as recited by claim 70, further configured to indicate to the buyer that a bargain price generated by buyer's bargain, upon being accepted by said system, will remain active, subject to acceptance by said buyer, during a predetermined time
15 period, provided that the product or service appointed for purchase remains available.
74. A system as recited by claim 70, further configured to notify the buyer and/or seller concerning the status of shipment in transit, said notification being provided (a) at the time of sale; and (b) periodically in response to a buyer or seller request after purchase of said product.
- 20 75. A system as recited by claim 70, wherein the processor is further operative with the program to initiate use of a payment identifier to collect funds.
76. A system as recited by claim 1, further configured to bargain with other existing systems on behalf of the buyer, said bargain being effected on a no-cost basis or for a fee.

77. A system as recited by claim 1, further configured to issue licenses to other existing systems or customers granting rights to use the claimed system for selling products and /or services.
78. A system as recited by claim 1, operable upon buyer's request to transfer the buyer to a toll free number to continue bargaining for a product.
79. A system as recited by claim 1, further configured to (a) permit buyers to purchase wild card discounts or special promotions from the system, and/ or (b) award such wild card discounts or special promotions on special bargain deals, and/or (c) award such wild card discounts or special promotions randomly or to privileged customers, said buyers being notified of such wild card discount or special promotion awards by surprise pop-up messages or by instant messaging, or by means of a "Bargain Guru".
80. A system as recited by claim 79, further configured so that the buyer can use the wild card discounts or special promotions to enhance bargaining opportunities, by buying bargain chances or obtaining a certain percentage reduction of a final bargain offer, said enhanced bargain opportunities being specified in a wild card discount or special promotion pop-up message, or by instant messaging, or by means of a "Bargain Guru".
81. A system as recited by claim 79, further configured to provide a graphic display, such as a "Bargometer" or a "Bargainmeter", adapted to graphically depict a probability for system acceptance of buyer's offer for purchase of the product.
82. A system as recited by claim 79, further configured to award purchase incentives selected from the group consisting of: (a) bonus chances made available upon the purchase of products and/or services, or in response to buyer request for free bonus

chances, or to encourage timely payment by regular customers and (b) purchase points provided upon purchase products.

83. A system as recited by claim 79, further configured to track buyer's accumulation of a predetermined number of purchase points, and notify buyer that said accumulated
5 purchase points are applicable to provide additional discounts, offers or enhanced bargaining opportunities, in accordance with said registration agreement.

84. A system as recited by claim 79, configured to provide at least one pop-up surprise message during bargaining, said surprise message according an additional discount on the product, or a special/promotional offer, such as "buy one, get one free", with
10 respect to said product.

85. A system as recited by claim 1, configured to sell said available products using an on-line retail store sales format.

86. A system as recited by claim 1, configured to place items on auction or to sell items procured using a procedure involving bids taken from a plurality of buyers, wherein
15 the product is sold to the buyer with the highest bid.

87. A system as recited by claim 1, further configured to provide for sale a product procured by the highest bidder in accordance with standard auction procedures, said standard auction procedures being initiated in the event that availability of said product is limited, or said product is in high demand.

20 88. A system as recited by claim 87, being further configured to permit the bargain sale price to be placed on hold for a predetermined amount of time upon request by the buyer, said holding of bargain sale price being effectuated either with or without a fee which is predetermined at registration.

89. A system as recited by claim 87, further configured to stop sale of the product to the buyer in the event that said buyer responds after the expiration of a predetermined amount of time.
90. A system as recited by claim 87, wherein the system is further configured to permit withdrawal of buyer's bid after acceptance by the system with or without payment of a specified penalty to the system.
91. A system as recited by claim 1, wherein said system effectuates worldwide purchase and /or sale of goods and services through its own website; by franchising of said system; by licensing a business module; and through affiliate programs with other existing business systems or websites.
92. A system as recited by claim 1, configured to buy and /or sell goods and services on a local and regional basis through its own website; by franchising said system; licensing a business module; and through affiliate programs with other existing business systems or websites.
93. A system for bargaining over the Internet, comprising:
- a. a processor;
 - b. a network interface;
 - c. a memory;
 - d. a data storage device;
 - e. an operating system;
 - f. a database management system
 - g. a database; and
 - h. and a high bandwidth connection to the Internet

- i. said system being configured to act on behalf of a customer comprised of a buyer or a seller, and perform a bargaining process comprising the steps of:
 - j. generating a bargain offer proposed by said customer;
 - k. accepting or rejecting a counter offer proposed by said system for said customer;
 - l. providing choices available to said customer and assisting said customer with product selection and bidding opportunities to arrive at a best bargain price;
 - m. guiding said customer throughout said bargaining process using "Bargain Guru" recommendations including comparative quotes, product ratings, alternative products, and pricing assistance.
94. A system as recited by claim 93, further configured to obtain a deal best suited to the buyer through the system by providing said comparative quotes for a particular product appointed for purchase from the system, said comparative quotes being obtained by searching for information or prices published by other extant systems or websites that sell substantially the same product.
95. A system as recited by claim 93, said system being further configured to (a) permit said buyer to resume bargaining for said product upon finding on another website or extant system a price for substantially the same product or services that is lower than the final bargain price, and (b) reduce said bargain price to a value less than or equal to said found price for substantially the same product or services.
96. A system as recited by claim 93, adapted to provide links to a site offering the lowest possible price for a particular product or service, in the event that said system cannot provide substantially the same price or a lower price through its vendors.

97. A system as recited by claim 12, further configured to use cartoon characters to provide bargaining assistance to buyer and seller, said cartoon characters being adapted to provide information from said database using a textual dialogue or voice dialogue.
- 5 98. A system as recited by claim 12, wherein said information provided by said cartoon characters includes: (a) major characteristics of said product; (b) bargain price; (c) purchasing strategies; (d) complementary remarks and encouraging comments that congratulate buyer on successful bargains and reinforce buyer's propensity to use said Internet bargaining process for purchase of other products and services; (e) purchasing assistance; (f) bargaining assistance; and (g) product selection assistance.
- 10 99. A system as recited by claim 12, wherein said website is provided with a box for comments and feedback from said customers, to indicate location of substantially the same product or service at a cheaper rate or price on other existing systems and websites, and set forth user complaints and compliments regarding the product or service.
- 15 100. A system as recited by claim 93, configured to bargain for, auction or purchase a product or service at retail on behalf of system customers from vendors or other websites or from other extant systems, said bargain for, auction or purchase of said product or service being initiated upon buyer's request, and being effectuated at no extra cost to buyer if said product or service is not listed on said system website, or if said product or service is cheaper on said other sites or systems.
- 20 101. A system as recited by claim 93, being further configured to designate a human representative for said purpose upon buyer request.

102. A system as recited by claim 93, said system being further configured to charge buyer a predetermined fee for acting on buyer's behalf.
103. A system as recited by claim 93, being further configured to increase the price of the product by adding thereto a fee for bargaining on behalf of a customer.
- 5 104. A system as recited by claim 12, further configured to customize said product by (a) gift wrapping, or (b) applying thereto a monogram, or (c) packaging said product with other product(s) and selling it as a combination product package.
105. A system as recited by claim 104, further configured so that other products in the package are offered at no price to thereby provide for purchaser to buy one gift and
10 get one free.
106. A system as recited by claim 105, configured so that each of a plurality of products in said combination product package is from the same vendor.
107. The system in claim 105, further configured such that said other products in said combination product package are from a plurality of different vendors.
- 15 108. A system as recited by claim 12, further configured so that, upon declining to purchase a product, a customer is precluded by said system from purchasing substantially the same product for a predetermined period of time.
109. A system as recited by claim 12, further configured to permit said buyer to resume bargaining for substantially the same product that buyer previously declined to
20 purchase, provided that such product is still available for purchase.
110. A system as recited by claim 12, further configured wherein the system may not sell the same product at the price that the buyer declined earlier, whereby buyer is required to repeat the bargaining process.

111. The system in claim 12, where the system is further configured configured to prevent the customer from logging on to said program or bargaining or using customer's existing account if the customer has been found to disobey the terms and conditions of the system that customer agreed to accept at the time of registration.

5 112. A computer-based interactive program, comprising:

- a. a payment processor module;
- b. a bargain formulation processor module;
- c. a database management module;
- d. a network interface module;
- 10 e. each of said payment processor, bargain formulation, database management and network interface modules running on an operating system, in coordination with a system, as recited by claim 1; and
- f. said program being further configured for attachment thereto of at least one additional module.

15 113. A computer program as recited by claim 112, configured to run on a web-server communicating with buyers and sellers using a communication mode selected from the group consisting of on-line, off-line and real-time.

114. A computer program as recited by claim 112, being further configured to process requests from buyers and sellers.

20 115. A computer program as recited by claim 112, being further configured to store data related to buyers and sellers, transactions, responses, bargain prices, and bargain deals for use in connection with database operations.

116. A computer program as recited by claim 112, being further configured to have an interface that provides means enabling buyers and sellers to access the products and/or services available through the system for sale.

117. A computer program as recited by claim 116, being further configured to enable buyers and sellers to input data related to a bargaining process..

118. A computer program as recited by claim 112, being further configured to be implemented on a distributed network.

119. A computer program as recited by claim 118, wherein said distributed network comprises the Internet and said interface comprises a Web browser.

120. A computer program as recited by claim 118, wherein said computer program further comprises a program for enabling buyers to (a) register by agreeing to the terms and conditions of the system (b) submit a buyer profile containing preselected information about said buyers, and (c) login to the system and bargain for goods and/or services.

121. A computer program as recited by claim 120, wherein said computer program is further configured to issue a unique membership identification and password to said buyers and to sellers registering with the system.

122. A computer program as recited by claim 112, further configured to register users by (a) asking for their profile and preselected information about said users; (b) storing said profile and preselected information in a secure database; and (c) issuing to buyer and seller a unique membership identification number.

123. A computer program as recited by claim 120, wherein said computer program is configured to authenticate buyer and/or seller to use services provided by the computer program.

124. A computer program as recited by claim 120, wherein said computer program is further configured to permit buyer or seller registration at no charge or for a predetermined fee.

125. A computer program as recited by claim 112, wherein said system is configured to provide buyer with preselected product information, including a list comprising products available for purchase through said system, product process and relative information concerning products, said preselected product information being provided after buyer logs onto the system by inputting buyer's membership ID and password.

126. A computer program as recited by claim 112, wherein said computer program is further configured to receive from a remote buyer a purchase comprising:

- a. a purchase offer; and
- b. a payment identifier specifying a financial account from which funds are appointed to be paid for a purchase of a product or service under conditions meeting buyer's requirements.

127. A computer program as recited by claim 112, wherein said computer program is further configured to initiate use of a financial account to effect said payment from said buyer.

128. A computer program as recited by claim 112, wherein said computer program is further configured to receive payment from said buyer through an electronic settlement system and said settlement system comprises electronic fund transfer, digital cash, electronic cash and a credit card system selected from the group consisting of credit card and debit card.

129. A computer program as recited by claim 120, wherein said purchase offer from said buyer comprises information elements, including product quantity, product quality,

purchase date, purchase price, payment terms, date of delivery, pickup location and delivery location of said product or services.

130. A computer program as recited by claim 129, wherein said system computer program is further configured to notify buyer that buyer's purchaser offer is accepted and buyer
5 has entered into a legally binding contract with the system.

131. A computer program as recited by claim 129, wherein said computer program is further configured to generate a bargain price response to buyer's purchase offer and transmit said bargain price response to said buyer.

132. A computer program as recited by claim 131, wherein said bargain price response
10 includes an expiration date and notification that said bargain price response is revocable by the system at any time prior to said expiration date.

133. A computer program as recited by claim 131, wherein said system bargain offer includes notification that said offer expires if not accepted within a predetermined time period, and that said offer can be withdrawn by the program without notice prior to
15 expiration of said preselected time period.

134. A computer program as recited by claim 131, wherein buyer has the right to withdraw said bargain offer after acceptance by said system, provided that said buyer pays a specified penalty to said system.

135. A computer program as recited by claim 131, wherein said computer program is
20 further configured to notify buyer that said bargain offer has lapsed in the event that said bargain offer expires without acceptance.

136. A computer program as recited by claim 131, wherein said computer program is further configured to collect payment for said purchase from the buyer.

137. A computer program as recited by claim 131, wherein said computer program is further configured place payment collected from the buyer in an escrow account.

138. A computer program as recited by claim 131, wherein said computer program is further configured to notify seller in the event of a sale of seller's product.

5 139. A computer program as recited by claim 131, wherein said computer program is further configured to transfer payment to the seller.

140. A computer program as recited by claim 112, wherein said system is further configured to communicate with the buyer without identifying the seller.

10 141. A computer program as recited by claim 112, being further configured to communicate with the seller without identifying the buyer.

142. In a computer program for electronically making a binding contract between buyer and seller, the improvement comprising the steps of;

15 a. receiving a purchase offer from the buyer containing a buyer request and a buyer payment identifier specifying a financial account from which funds may be paid for a purchase meeting criteria set by the buyer;

b. notifying said buyer concerning acceptance or rejection of said purchase offer.

143. A computer program as recited by claim 142, wherein said computer program is further configured to receive payment through a credit card.

20 144. A computer program as recited by claim 142, being further configured to initiate use of said financial account to effect payment of said funds from buyer.

145. A computer program as recited by claim 142, wherein said purchase comprises plural buyer request elements, including product quantity, product quality, purchase date,

purchase price, payment terms, date of delivery and location and delivery of said product or services.

146. A computer program as recited by claim 112, having a processor for processing the sale of a product comprising:

- 5 a. a common port for obtaining a purchase offer for said product from said buyer;
- b. a payment identifier from which payment for such product may be made;
- c. a processor configured to present to buyer a plurality of available products; and
- 10 d. program bargain means for enabling said buyer to bargain for at least one of said products.

147. A computer program as recited by claim 146, said program being configured to provide a channel of communication between said buyer and said seller without revealing their identities.

15 148. A computer program as recited by claim 146, said program being configured to provide incentives to the buyer for making said product selection.

149. A computer program as recited by claim 146, which is operative to bargain for said product selected by said buyer during a bargaining process adapted to arrive at an acceptable bargain price.

20 150. A computer program as recited by claim 146, wherein said processor, after accepting said bargain price, notifies said buyer about the acceptance and draws payment for said product from said payment identifier.

151. A computer program as recited by claim 112, for processing the sale of a package of component items, comprising: a communications port for receiving a purchase offer

from a buyer containing product requirements for each of said component items of said package and a bargain price for said package.

152. A computer program as recited by claim 151, wherein said processor is further configured to: (a) disassemble said package purchase offer into plurality of component
5 component items; (b) determine for each of the component items whether a bargain offer can be accepted or rejected; and (c) bind said buyer to purchase the package if the program accepts said bargain price for the package.

153. A computer program as recited by claim 151, wherein said processor is configured to receive a purchase offer for each component item of said package.

10 154. A computer program as recited by claim 151, wherein said processor initiates use of a payment identifier to collect funds upon acceptance of a bargain offer.

155. A computer program as recited by claim 151, wherein each component item of said package has a price based on the percentage of the market value for said component item to the total market value of all component items in said package.

15 156. A computer program as recited by claim 151, wherein a bargain offer response for each component item in said package and a bargain price for said package is generated by said program and sent to said buyer with notice that buyer acceptance must be effected during a preselected time period.

20 157. A computer program as recited by claim 156, wherein said bargain offer response generated by said program includes a total price, and a portion of the total price is reserved as a margin.

158. A computer program as recited by claim 156, wherein said processor decreases the price of one or more component items of said package, or decreases the price of said

package, thereby generating a new bargain offer response that is more acceptable to the buyer.

159. A computer program as recited by claim 156, wherein the processor decreases the price of at least one component of said package, or decreases the price of said package without disclosing the price reduction of the component items in said package, thereby
5 accruing a new counter bargain offer which is more acceptable to said buyer and said system.

160. A computer program as recited by claim 156, wherein said buyer is bound to purchase said package of components if said bargain price is accepted by said program, and said
10 price of said component items is not disclosed to said buyer.

161. A computer program for using a computer to facilitate a transaction between a buyer and at least one seller, which comprises:

- a. inputting into said computer a purchase offer which includes information about the product and a bargain offer which includes an offer price;
- b. inputting into said computer a payment mode identifier associated with the bargain offer; and
- c. transmitting said inputted information to said computer program.

162. In a computer program which receives a bargain offer containing a price offered by a buyer for a product, the improvement wherein a processor performs steps which
20 comprise:

- (a) validating said bargain offer;
- (b) determining availability of said product; and
- (c) storing information concerning bargain offer, validity and said product in a data base..

163. A computer program as recited by claim 161, being operative to generate an acknowledgement response for a bargain offer received from said buyer, said bargain offer being assessed by said system to determine the validity thereof in accordance with the following criteria:

- 5 (a) said bargain offer for said product has expired; (b) said product is unavailable; and
(c) a predetermined amount is not available in the payment mode identifier.

164. A computer program for processing the sale and purchase of items, comprising:

- 10 a. a storage device;
b. a processor;
c. said storage device being operative to store programs for controlling said processor;
d. said processor being operative with said program to receive bargain offers from said buyer; and
e. said bargain offers including a condition for purchase of said product and a
15 payment identifier thereby defining the bargain offer.

165. A computer program as recited by claim 164, further configured to receive bargain offers from a plurality of sellers, said bargain offers including:

- 20 a. conditions for sale of the product;
b. details about the product;
c. a seller price for the product; and
d. a payment identifier specifying mode of payment.

166. A computer program as recited by claim 164, wherein said processor has a processing program operative to query each buyer to obtain therefrom a unique member ID and password, for use in identifying a buyer from which a bargain offer is received.

167. A computer program as recited by claim 164, wherein said processor has a processing program operative to query each seller to obtain therefrom a unique member ID and password, for use in identifying a seller from which a bargain offer is received.

168. A computer program as recited by claim 164, said processor program being further
5 configured to verify legitimacy / authenticity /condition of said product or service and the pricing of products or services listed by the seller, said verification being carried out by a process comprising the steps of:

- a. issuing an authenticity certificate from an authorized appraiser;
- b. issuing a price evaluation from said appraiser;
- 10 c. checking product certification at time of pick-up or delivery; and
- d. checking condition of said product at time of pick-up and/or delivery.

169. A computer program as recited by claim 168, further configured permit the product to be evaluated and appraised by an authorized appraiser nominated by the system.

170. A computer program as recited by claim 168, further configured to permit the seller to
15 pay the cost of evaluation, so that the cost is not included in the price of the product.

171. A computer program as recited by claim 168, further configured to permit the cost of evaluation to be paid by the system to its nominated appraiser so that the cost is included in the price of the product.

172. A computer program as recited by claim 168, further configured to (a) initiate legal
20 action against a seller that fails to produce said product at time of pick-up, said legal action seeking redress in the form of legal remedies, including a court order preventing payment to seller; (b) charge seller a predetermined penalty, as specified in said registration agreement; or (c) cancel seller's registration, as specified in said registration agreement

173. A computer program as recited by claim 168, further configured to provide for agreement between buyer and said seller at time of registration, permitting said system to stop payment to the seller for sale of said product if seller fails to produce said authentication certificate or produces a false certificate at time of pick-up.

5 174. A computer program as recited by claim 168, wherein said processor is further operative with said processing program to validate a received bargain offer signal from said buyer and/or seller thereby determine whether said received offer signal meets predetermined validation criteria.

10 175. A computer program as recited by claim 174, wherein said processor is further operative with said processor program to process said received bargain offer from said buyer and/or seller, if said step of validation determines that said received bargain offer meets predetermined criteria.

15 176. A computer program as recited by claim 174, wherein said processor is further configured to start said bargain process by generating bargain prices for said buyer and said seller continuously, until a point is reached where (a) an acceptable price is arrived at; or (b) said buyer or said seller stops bargaining; or (c) said product becomes unavailable; or (d) said bargain price generated by said system reaches its limit; or (e) said buyer or said seller runs out of bonus chances or does not request additional chances; or (f) said predetermined time period allotted for bargaining has expired.

20 177. A computer program as recited by claim 176, wherein said processor is further operative with said processing program to stop the bargaining process in response to a request of the buyer and/or seller without charging any penalty or fees.

178. A computer program as recited by claim 176, wherein said processor is further operative with said processing program to accept a bargaining offer containing seller's price offer after validating that said bargaining offer meets predetermined criteria.

179. A computer program as recited by claim 176, said processor being further operative
5 with said processing program to process an acceptance received from the buyer after validating that a bargain offer meets predetermined criteria, storing said bargain offer in said database.

180. A computer program as recited by claim 176, said processor being further operative
10 with said program to transmit a notification to the buyer indicating that buyer's bargain offer is less than certain minimum predetermined offer criteria and asking the buyer to submit another bargain offer, or quit the process, or to follow a bargaining recommendation provided by a "Bargain Guru".

181. A computer program as recited by claim 176, further configured to permit buyer to (a)
15 request free chances, or (b) buy more chances for at a predetermined chance purchase price, or (c) redeem purchase points to buy more chances to bargain after the system program has stopped bargaining for a particular product or service.

182. The computer program in claim 181, further configured to permit buyer and/or seller
use at least one bargain chance provided by the program to continue bargaining until
all chances issued to buyer or seller have been used or until a bargain price is accepted.

20 183. A computer program as recited by claim 181, further configured to permit buyer to use
one or more bargain chances provided by the program to continue bargaining until all
chances issued to buyer have been used; said buyer having an election to (a) request
free chances; or (b) purchase additional chances for a predetermined chance purchase
price; or (c) to redeem purchase points applicable towards purchase of additional

chances; or (d) to accept the system bargain price; or (e) to follow a purchase recommendation provided by a "Bargain Guru.

184. A computer program as recited by claim 181, further configured to indicate to the buyer that the bargain price generated by buyer's bargain offer will remain active,
5 subject to acceptance by said buyer during a predetermined time period, provided that the product or service appointed for purchase remains available.

185. A computer program as recited by claim 181, further configured to notify the buyer and/or seller about the state of shipment in transit, said notification being provided (a) at the time of sale; or (b) periodically, in response to a buyer or seller request after
10 purchase of said product.

186. A computer program as recited by claim 181, wherein said processor is further operative with said program to initiate use of a payment identifier to collect funds.

187. A computer program as recited by claim 112, further configured to bargain with other existing systems on behalf of the buyer, said bargain being effected on a no cost basis
15 or for a fee.

188. A computer program as recited by claim 112, further configured to issue licenses to other extant systems or customers granting rights to use an Internet bargaining program for selling products and /or services.

189. A computer program as recited by claim 112, further operative, at buyer request, to
20 transfer buyer to a toll free number to continue bargaining for a selected product.

190. A computer program as recited by claim 112, further configured to (a) permit buyers to purchase wild card discounts or special promotions from the system and/or (b) award such wild card discounts or special promotions on special bargain deals, and/or (c) award such wild card discounts or special promotions randomly or to privileged

customers, said buyers being notified of such wild card discount or special promotion awards by surprise pop-up messages, or by instant messaging, or by means of a “Bargain Guru”.

191. A computer program as recited by claim 190, further configured so that the buyer can use said wild card discounts or special promotions to enhance bargaining opportunities, buy buying bargain chances or obtaining a certain percentage reduction off a final bargain offer, said enhanced bargain opportunities being specified in a wild card discount or a special promotion pop-up message, or by instant messaging, or by means of a “Bargain Guru”.

192. A computer program as recited by claim 190, further configured to provide a graphic display, such as a “Bargometer” or “Bargainmeter”, adapted to graphically depict a probability for system acceptance of buyer’s offer for purchase of the product.

193. A computer program as recited by claim 190, further configured to award purchase incentives selected from the group consisting of: (a) bonus chances made available upon purchase of products and/or services or in response to buyer’s request for free bonus chances, or to encourage timely payment by regular customers; and (b) purchase points provided upon purchase of products.

194. A computer program as recited by claim 190, further configured to track buyers accumulation of a predetermined number of purchase points and notify buyer that said accumulated purchase points are applicable to provide additional purchase discounts, offers, or enhanced bargaining opportunities, in accordance with said registration agreement.

195. A computer program as recited by claim 190, further configured to provide at least one pop-up surprise special message during bargaining, said surprise message according an

additional discount on the product, or a special/promotional offer, such as “buy one, get one free”, with respect to said product.

196. A computer program as recited by claim 112, further configured to sell the available products using an on-line retail store sales format.

5 197. A computer program as recited by claim 112, further configured to place items on auction; or to sell items procured using a procedure involving bids taken from a plurality of buyers, wherein the product is sold to the buyer with the highest bid.

198. A computer program as recited by claim 112, further configured to provide for sale of product procured by the highest bidder in accordance with standard auction
10 procedures, said standard auction procedures being initiated in the event that availability of said product is limited, or said product is in high demand.

199. A computer program as recited by claim 198, being further configured to permit the bargain sale price to be placed on hold for a predetermined amount of time upon
15 request of the buyer said holding of bargain sale price being effectuated either with or without a fee which is predetermined at registration.

200. A computer program as recited by claim 198, further configured to stop sale of the product to the buyer in the event that said buyer responds after the expiration of a predetermined amount of time.

201. A computer program as recited by claim 198, wherein the computer program is further
20 configured to permit withdrawal of buyer's bid after acceptance by the program upon payment of a specified penalty to the system.

202. A computer program as recited by claim 112, wherein said program effectuates worldwide purchase and/or sale of goods and services through its own website using

the Internet; by franchising of said system; by licensing of a business module; and through affiliated programs with other existing business systems or websites.

203. A computer program as recited by claim 112, wherein said program is configured to purchase and /or sell goods and services on a local and regional basis, said purchase or sale of goods or services being accomplished: (a) over the Internet using said program's website; (b) by franchising the program; (c) by licensing the business module; and (d) through affiliate programs with other extant business systems or websites.

204. A computer program, comprising:

- a. a payment processor module;
- b. a billing processor module;
- c. an encoding/Decoding processor module;
- d. a bargain formulation processor module;
- e. a database management module;
- f. a database connection module;
- g. a commission calculation and processing module,
- h. a system and business rules module
- i. a network interface module;
- j. said computer program running on an operating system in conjunction with the program recited by claim 112, and being further configured to have additional modules attached thereto when and if required, and to act on behalf of a customer comprised of a buyer or a seller, to perform a bargaining process comprising the steps of:
 - k. generating a bargain offer proposed by said customer;

- l. accepting or rejecting a counter offer proposed by the program for the customer;
- m. providing choices available to said customer and assisting said customer with product selection and bidding opportunities to arrive at a best bargain price;
- n. guiding said customer throughout said bargain process using "Bargain Guru" recommendations, including comparative quotes, product ratings, alternative products, and pricing assistance.

205. A computer program as recited by claim 204, further configured to obtain a deal best suited to the buyer through the processing program by providing said comparative quotes for a particular appointed for purchase from the program, said comparative quotes being obtained by searching for information or prices from different extant systems or websites that sell substantially the same product.

206. A computer program as recited by claim 204, said system being further configured to (a) permit said buyer to resume bargaining for the product upon finding on another website or extant program a price for substantially the same product or services that is lower than the final bargain price, and (b) reduce said bargain price to a value less than or equal to said found price for substantially the same product or services.

207. A computer program as recited by claim 204, adapted to provide links to a site that is offering the lowest possible price for a particular product or service, in the event that said Internet bargaining program cannot provide substantially the same price or a lower price through its vendors.

208. A computer program as recited by claim 125, further configured to use cartoon characters to provide bargaining assistance to buyer and seller, said cartoon characters

being adapted to provide information from said database using a textual dialogue or voice dialogue.

209. A computer program as recited by claim 125, wherein said information provided by said cartoon characters includes: (a) major characteristics of said product; (b) bargain price; (c) purchasing strategies; and (d) complementary remarks and encouraging comments that congratulate buyer on successful bargains and reinforce buyer's propensity to use said Internet bargaining process for purchase of other products and services, (e) purchasing assistance, (f) bargaining assistance, and (g) product selection assistance.

210. A computer program as recited by claim 125, further configured wherein said website is provided with a suggestion box for comments and feedback from said customers, indicate location of substantially the same product or service at a cheaper rate or price on other existing systems and websites, and set forth user complaints and complements regarding the product or service.

211. A computer program as recited by claim 204, further configured to bargain for, auction or purchase a product or service at retail on behalf of system customers from vendors or other websites or any other existing systems, said bargained for, auction or purchase of said product or service being initiated upon buyer's request and being effected at no extra cost to buyer if said product and/or service is not listed on said system website, or said product or service is cheaper on said other sites or systems.

212. A computer program as recited by claim 204, further configured to designate a human representative for said purpose upon buyer's request.

213. A computer program as recited by claim 204, further configured so that the program charges the buyer a predetermined fee for acting on buyer's behalf.

214. A computer program as recited by claim 204, the program is further configured to increase the price of the product by adding thereto a fee for bargaining on behalf of a customer.

215. A computer program as recited by claim 125, the program being further configured to customize the product by gift wrapping or applying a monogram, or by packaging the product with other product(s) and selling it as a combination product package.

216. A computer program as recited by claim 215, further configured so that other products of said package are sold at no cost to thereby provide for purchaser to buy one gift and get one free.

217. A program as recited by claim 216, further configured so that each of a plurality of products in the combination product package is from the same vendor.

218. A computer program as recited by claim 216, configured so that said other products in said combination product package are from a plurality of different vendors.

219. A computer program as recited by claim 125, further configured so that upon declining to purchase a product, a customer is precluded by said system from purchasing substantially the same product for a predetermined period of time

220. A computer program as recited by claim 125, further configured to permit the buyer to resume bargaining for substantially the same product that buyer previously declined to purchase, provided that such product is still available for purchase.

221. A computer program as recited by claim 125, further configured so that the program may not sell the same product at the price that the buyer declined earlier, whereby buyer is required to repeat the bargaining process.

222. A computer program as recited by claim 125, further configured to prevent the customer from logging on to said program or bargaining or using customer's existing

account if the customer has been found to disobey the terms and conditions of the system that customer agreed to accept at the time of registration.

223. A computer-based interactive method for using a system as recited by claim 1, and being governed by a program, as recited by claim 112, said method being configured to permit more modules to be attached when and if required, to consummate a binding contract between the system and the buyer and/or the system and the seller and/or between the buyer and seller through bargaining.

224. A method as recited by claim 223, configured to run on a web-server communicating with the buyers and sellers using a communication mode selected from the group consisting of on-line, off-line and in real-time.

225. A method as recited by claim 223, further comprising the step of processing requests from buyers and/or sellers.

226. A method as recited by claim 223, further comprising the step of storing data related to buyers, sellers, transactions, responses, bargain prices, and bargain deals for use in connection with database operations.

227. A method as recited by claim 223, further comprising the step of creating an interface that enables buyers and sellers to access the products and/or services available to the system for sale.

228. A method as recited by claim 227, further comprising the step of enabling buyers and sellers to input data related to a bargaining process.

229. A method as recited by claim 227, wherein said method steps are carried out on a distributed network.

230. A method as recited by claim 229, wherein said distributed network is the Internet and said interface comprises a Web browser.

231. A method in as recited by claim 229, wherein said method further comprises the steps of:

- a. enabling buyers to register by agreeing to the terms and conditions of the system;
- b. enabling buyers to submit a buyer profile containing preselected information about said buyers;
- c. enabling buyers to log-in to the system and bargain for goods and/or services.

232. A method as recited by claim 231, wherein said method comprises the step of issuing a unique membership identification and password to said buyers or sellers at time of registration.

233. A method as recited by claim 223, wherein user registration comprises the steps of:

- a. asking for a user's profile and preselected information about said users;
- b. storing said profile and said preselected information in a secure database; and
- c. issuing to each user a unique membership identification number.

234. A method as recited by claim 231, comprising the step of authenticating buyer and/or seller to use a service provided by the system.

235. A method as recited by claim 231, further comprising the step of effecting registration of buyers or sellers, said registration being carried out individually by buyers and sellers, and being effected at no cost or for a predetermined fee.

236. A method as recited by 223, comprising the step of providing buyers with preselected product information, including a list comprising products available for purchase through said system, product prices and relative information concerning products, said step of providing preselected product information being carried out after buyer logs on to the system by inputting buyer's membership id and password.

237. A method as recited by claim 223, further comprising the step of receiving from a remote buyer a purchase request comprising (a) a purchase offer; and (b) a payment identifier specifying a financial account from which funds are appointed to be paid for purchase of a product or service under conditions meeting buyer requirements.

5 238. A method as recited by 223, further comprising the step of initiating the use of a financial account to effect the payment from the buyer.

239. A method as recited by claim 223, further comprising the step of receiving payment from the buyer through an electronic settlement system and said settlement system comprises electronic fund transfer, digital cash, electronic cash and a credit card system selected from the group consisting of credit card and debit card.

10 240. A method as recited by claim 231, further comprising the step of receiving from said buyer a purchaser offer including product quantity, product quality, purchase date, purchase price, payment terms, date of delivery, pick-up location and delivery location of said product or services.

15 241. A method is recited by 240, further comprising the step of notifying buyer that buyer's purchaser offer is accepted and that buyer has entered into a legally binding contract with the system.

242. A method as recited by claim 240, further comprising the steps of:

- 20 a. generating a bargain price in response to the purchase offer by the buyer; and
 b. transmitting said bargain price to the buyer.

243. A method as recited by claim 242, said bargain price including an expiration date and being revocable by the program at any time prior to that date.

244. A method as recited by claim 240, wherein the system bargain offer expires if not accepted within a predetermined time period and can be withdrawn by the program without notice prior to that time.

245. A method as recited by claim 240, further comprising the step of informing seller that
5 buyer has the right to withdraw buyer's bargain offer after acceptance by the program provided buyer pays a specified penalty to the system.

246. A method as recited by claim 240, further comprising the step of notifying the buyer that the bargain offer has lapsed in the event that the bargain offer expires without acceptance.

10 247. A method as recited by claim 240, further comprising the step of collecting payment from said buyer for purchase of said product.

248. A method as recited by claim 240, further comprising the step of directing payment collected from the buyer to an escrow account.

249. A method as recited by claim 240, further comprising the step of notifying seller
15 concerning the event of sale of a product or service.

250. A method as recited by claim 240, further comprising the step of transferring payment to the seller.

251. A method as recited by claim 223, further comprising the step of communicating with a buyer without identifying a seller.

20 252. A method as recited by claim 223, further comprising the step of communicating with a seller without identifying a buyer.

253. A method for electronically making a binding contract between a buyer and a seller comprising the steps of:

- a. receiving a purchase offer from said buyer containing buyer's requests and a payment identifier specifying the financial account from which funds may be paid for a purchase meeting criteria set by said buyer; and
- b. notifying said buyer of the event of acceptance or rejection.

5 254. A method as recited by claim 253, further comprising the step of receiving payment for a product or service through a credit card.

255. A method as recited by claim 253, further comprising the step of accessing said financial account to extract therefrom said payment from buyer.

10 256. A method as recited by claim 253, further comprising the step of receiving a purchase offer from the buyer consisting of product quantity, product quality, purchase date, purchase price, payment terms, date of delivery, pick-up location, and delivery location of said products or services.

257. A method for processing the sale of a product purchased using the computer based Internet bargaining system recited by claim 1, comprising the steps of:

- 15
- a. obtaining a purchase offer for the product from the buyer and a payment identifier from which the payment for the product may be made;
 - b. presenting buyer with a plurality of available products; and
 - c. bargaining with buyer for at least one product selection from said products.

20 258. A method as recited by claim 257, further comprising the step of providing a channel of communication between said buyer and said seller without revealing their identities.

259. A method as recited by claim 257, further comprising the step of providing incentives to the buyer for making a product selection.

260. A method as recited by claim 257, further comprising the steps of:

- a. bargaining for said product selection; and

b. arriving at an acceptable price.

261. A method as recited by claim 260, further comprising the steps of:

- a. notifying said buyer of the event of acceptance of said price; and
- b. drawing payment for said product selection from said payment identifier.

5 262. A method for processing the sale of a package of component items purchased using an Internet bargaining system as recited by claim 223, further comprising the step of receiving, through a communications port, a purchase offer from a customer containing purchase requirements and a bargain price.

263. A method as recited by claim 262, further comprising the steps of:

- 10 a. disassembling said package purchaser offer into a plurality of component bargain offers;
- b. determining whether each of said component bargain offers can be accepted or rejected;
- c. binding the buyer to purchase the package, in the event that said component
- 15 bargain offers can be accepted, by accepting a bargain price for said package.

264. A method as recited by claim 263, further comprising the step of receiving a purchase offer for each component item of said package.

265. A method as recited by claim 263, further comprising the step using said payment identifier to collect funds upon acceptance of said bargain offer.

20 266. A method as recited by claim 263, further comprising the step of basing a price for each component on a percentage of said component's market value to a market value arrived at by summing all components in said package.

267. A method as recited by claim 263, further comprising the steps of:

- a. generating a bargain offer for each component in said package and a bargain price for all components in said package; and
- b. sending said bargain offer to the buyer with notice that said bargain offer remains valid for a preselected time period.

5 268. A method as recited by claim 267, further comprising the step of providing in said bargain offer a total price for said package, a portion of said total price being reserved as margin.

10 269. A method as recited by claim 267, further comprising the step of generating a new bargain offer having an increased prospect for buyer acceptance, said new bargain offer being characterized by a decreased price for said package, or of one or more components thereof.

270. A method as recited by claim 267, further comprising the step of decreasing the price of said package, or of one or more components thereof, to arrive at a counter bargain offer having an increased prospect for acceptance by said buyer.

15 271. A method as recited by claim 267, further comprising the step of binding said buyer to purchase the package of components upon acceptance of said bargain price by said program, said price for each of said components of said package remaining undisclosed to the buyer.

20 272. A method for using a computer to facilitate a transaction between a buyer and a seller, comprising the steps of:

- a. inputting into a computer a purchase offer which includes information about the product and a bargain offer which includes an offer price;
- b. inputting into a computer a payment mode identifier including information associated with said purchase offer;

- c. transmitting said inputted purchase offer and payment mode identifier to said buyer and said seller.

273. A method of using a computer to receive a bargain offer containing the price offered by a buyer for a product, comprising the steps of:

- a. validating said bargain offer;
- b. determining availability of said product; and
- c. storing information derived from steps "a" and "b" in a database.

274. A method as recited by claim 272, further comprising the step of generating an acknowledgement response for a bargain offer received from a buyer, said acknowledgement response being arrived at by determining the validity of the bargain offer in accordance with the following validation criteria: (a) whether the bargain offer for the product has expired; (b) whether said product is available; and (c) whether a predetermined dollar amount is available in the payment mode identifier.

275. A method for processing the sale and purchase of a product or service using a storage device, a processor and a program operative to control said processor, comprising the steps of:

- a. storing said program in said storage device;
- b. opening said program;
- c. operating said processor to receive a buyer request for purchase of said product or service and a payment identifier, defining a bargain offer.

276. A method as recited by claim 275, further comprising the step of receiving a bargain offer from a seller including (a) conditions for sale of said product or service, (b) details about the product or service, (c) a seller price for the product or service, and (d) a payment identifier specifying an account to which funds may be paid.

277. A method as recited by claim 275, further comprising the step of using said processor to identify the buyer from which said bargain offer is received on the basis of buyer provided information, including buyer's ID and password.

278. A method as recited by claim 275, further comprising the step of using said processor and said program to identify the seller.

279. A method as recited by claim 275, wherein said program to verifies the legitimacy / authenticity /condition of said product and the pricing of products being listed by the seller, said verification being accomplished by a method comprising the steps of:

- a. issuing an authenticity certificate from an authorized appraiser;
- b. evaluating the price arrived at by said appraiser;
- c. checking said certification at the time of pick-up or delivery of said product;
- d. checking the condition of the product at the time of delivery.

280. A method as recited by claim 279, further comprising the step of using said program to identify and nominate said authorized appraiser.

281. A method as recited by claim 279, further comprising the step of requiring seller to pay the cost of said evaluation and excluding said cost from the price of the product.

282. A method as recited by claim 279, further comprising the steps of:

- a. paying the cost of evaluation to said nominated appraiser; and
- b. including said cost in the price of the product.

283. A method as recited by claim 279, further comprising at least one of the following steps, to which seller has agreed during registration:

- a. initiating legal action against the seller in the event that the seller does not produce the product at time of delivery;
- b. preventing payment to the seller;

- c. imposing on seller a predetermined penalty; and
- d. canceling seller's registration.

284. A method as recited by claim 279, further comprising the step of stopping payment to the seller for the sale of the product if seller fails to produce said authentication certificate, or produces a false certificate, at time of delivery, as agreed to by seller during registration.

285. A method as recited by claim 279, further comprising the step of validating the received bargain offer signal from the buyer and/or seller to determine whether said received bargain offer signal meets predetermined validation criteria.

286. A method as recited by claim 285, further comprising the step of processing the received bargain offer from the buyer and/or seller solely in the event of a determination during said validation step that the received bargain offer meets predetermined criteria.

287. A method as recited by claim 285, further comprising the step of initiating the bargain process by generating bargain prices for the buyer, said generation of bargain prices continuing until occurrence of one of the following events: (a) an acceptable price is arrived at; or (b) said buyer or said seller stops bargaining; or (c) said product becomes unavailable; or (d) said bargain price generated by said system reaches its limit; or (e) said buyer or said seller runs out of bonus chances or does not request additional chances; or (f) said predetermined time period allotted for bargaining has expired.

288. A method as recited by claim 287, further comprising the step of stopping said bargaining process upon request of the buyer and/or seller without charging any penalty or fees.

289. A method as recited by claim 287, further comprising the step of accepting the bargaining offer containing buyer's price offer after validating that said offer meets predetermined criteria.

290. A method as recited by claim 287, further comprising the steps of:

- 5 a. validating that the bargain offer meets predetermined criteria;
- b. processing the acceptance received from the buyer;
- c. storing said acceptance in said database.

291. A method as recited by claim 287, further comprising the steps of:

- 10 a. notifying the buyer that buyer's bargain offer fell short of minimum predetermined offer criteria; and
- b. requesting that buyer send another bargain offer or quit the bargaining process; or to follow a bargaining recommendation provided by a "Bargain Guru".

15 292. A method as recited by claim 287, further comprising the step of permitting buyer to request free chances, or buy additional chances for a predetermined chance purchase amount, or redeem purchase points to purchase additional chances to bargain after the system program has stopped bargaining with buyer and seller.

20 293. A method as recited by claim 292, further comprising the step of permitting buyer and/or seller to use at least one bargain chance to continue bargaining until buyer and/or seller run out of chances or accept a program proposed bargain price.

294. A method as recited by claim 292, further comprising the step of permitting buyer to use program provided bargain chances to continue bargaining until said chances are exhausted or buyer requests free chances or buys more chances for a predetermined chance purchase price or redeems purchase points to buy more chances, or accepts a

program proposed bargain price, or follows a purchase recommendation provided by a “Bargain Guru”.

295. A method as recited by claim 292, further comprising the steps of indicating to the buyer that the bargain price generated by the buyer’s bargain offer will remain active and acceptable for a predetermined time period provided that the product or service remains available.

296. A method as recited by claim 292, further comprising the step of notifying the buyer and/or seller concerning the status of shipment in transit, said notifying step being carried out after completion of a purchase transaction, or in response to a buyer or seller inquiry.

297. A method as recited by claim 292, further comprising the step of initiating use of a payment identifier to collect funds.

298. A method as recited by claim 223, further comprising the step of bargaining or trading with additional extant systems on behalf of the buyer, said bargaining or trading step being carried out at no cost or for a predetermined fee.

299. A method as recited by claim 223, further comprising the step of issuing at least one license to at least one other extant system or to at least one other customer, authorizing use of the program for sale of products and /or services.

300. A method as recited by claim 223, further comprising the step of transferring said buyer to a toll free number to continue bargaining for said selected product, upon request of said buyer.

301. A method as recited by claim 223, further comprising the step of permitting a buyer (a) to purchase wild card discounts or special promotions from said program; and/ or (b) to be awarded said wild card discounts or special promotions by said program on

special bargain deals; and/or (c) to receive said wild card discounts or special promotions randomly; and/or (d) to be accorded said wild card discounts or special promotion awards by surprise pop-up messages, or by instant messaging, or by means of a “Bargain Guru”.

5 302. A method as recited by claim 301, further comprising the step of permitting buyer to use the wild card discounts or special promotions to buy bargain chances or get a preselected percentage reduction from the final bargain offer in accordance with specifications contained in the wild card discount or special promotion pop-up message, or by instant messaging, or by means of a “Bargain Guru.

10 303. A method as recited by claim 301, further comprising the step of using a Bargometer or Bargainmeter to graphically depict a probability for system acceptance of buyer’s offer for purchase of the product.

304. A method as recited by claim 301, further comprising the steps of:

- a. awarding points selected from the group consisting of bonus points available on the purchase of products and/or services, free points available upon request or free points obtainable by payment of a fee to a regular customer on timely basis, and
- b. providing purchase points, obtainable upon the purchase of products.

15 305. A method as recited by claim 301, further comprising the step of permitting buyer to accumulate a preselected number of points, and to use these points to get additional discounts or offers or enhanced bargaining opportunities in accordance with said registration agreement.

20 306. A method as recited by claim 301, further comprising the step of providing at least one pop-up surprise message during bargaining, said surprise message according (a) an

additional discount on the product; (b) a special/promotional offer, such as “buy one, get one free”, with respect to said product.

307. A method as recited by claim 223, further comprising the step of selling available products using an on-line retail store sales format.

5 308. A method as recited by claim 223, further comprising the step of selling items procured using a procedure involving bids taken from a plurality of buyers, wherein the product is sold to the buyer that submits the highest bid.

309. A method as recited by claim 223, further comprising the steps of:

- a. determining whether a product for which a bid is submitted has limited availability or is in high demand; and
- 10 b. procuring said product using a procedure involving bids taken from a plurality of buyers, wherein the product is sold to the buyer with the highest bid.

310. A method as recited by claim 309, further comprising the steps of placing said bid price on hold for a predetermined time at the request of a buyer who is the highest bidder, said price holding step being carried out at no cost or for a predetermined fee.

311. A method as recited by claim 309, further comprising the step of stopping sale of said product in the event that, said bidder responds after expiration of a predetermined time.

15 312. A method as recited by claim 309, further comprising the step of permitting the buyer to withdraw a bid after acceptance by said program provided buyer pays a specified penalty to the system.

313. A method as recited by claim 223, further comprising the step of buying and/or selling goods and services on a worldwide basis through (a) said program’s website, using the

Internet, and/or (b) franchising said program, and/or (c) licensing the business module, and /or (d) affiliate programs with other existing business systems or websites.

314. A method as recited by claim 223, further comprising the step of buying and /or selling goods and services on a local and regional basis through (a) said program's website, using the Internet, and/or (b) franchising said program, and/or (c) licensing the business module, and /or (d) affiliate programs with other existing business systems or websites.

315. A method of using the Internet bargaining system in claim 1, said system running the program recited by claim 112 having at least one additional module attached thereto for consummating a binding contract between the system and a customer comprised of a buyer or a seller through bargaining, and for acting on behalf of the customer to perform a bargaining process comprising the steps of:

- a. generating a bargain offer proposed by said customer;
- b. accepting or rejecting a counter offer proposed to the program for the product;
- c. consulting with the customer throughout the bargaining process to obtain customer consent and customer preferences; and
- d. electing from among choices available to the customer on customer's behalf, to optimally use customer's available resources to arrive at a final bargain price.

316. A method as recited by claim 315, further comprising the steps of:

- a. searching for information or prices from different existing systems or websites that are selling substantially the same product;

- b. providing to a customer comparative quotes of a specific product appointed for purchase through said Internet bargaining system.

317. A method as recited by claim 315, further comprising the steps of:

- a. countering the final bargain price to seek a bargain price adjustment based on a customer found price, from another website or existing system, which has been substantiated to be lower than the final bargain price; and
- b. further bargaining on customer's behalf for a bargain price adjustment that results in a price equal to or less than the found price for substantially the same product or service.

318. A method as recited by claim 223, further comprising the step of providing links to a site that offers the lowest possible price for a particular product or service in the event that the said program cannot provide a lower price for such product or service through its vendors.

319. A method as recited by claim 318, further comprising the step using cartoon characters to assist people in bargaining through the program, the cartoon characters providing information from a database using a textual dialogue or voice dialogue.

320. A method as recited by claim 318, further comprising the step of providing information using cartoon characters, such information including (a) major characteristics of the product, (b) bargain price, (c) purchasing strategies, (d) complementary remarks and encouraging comments that congratulate buyer for concluding successful bargains, (e) purchasing assistance, (f) bargaining assistance, and (g) product selection assistance.

321. A method as recited by claim 318, further comprising the step providing on said website a box for comments and feedback from customers that find substantially the same product or service at cheaper rates on another existing system or website, and

which provides a receptacle for customer complaints and compliments regarding the product or service.

322. A method as recited by claim 223, further comprising the step of procuring said product or service on behalf of a customer at the customer's request and with or without additional cost by a procurement process including bidding at auction and purchasing at retail from another vendor, website or extant system, in the event that the product and/or service is not listed on the system website or if it is less expensive on said other website or extant system.

323. A method as recited by claim 223, further comprising the step of designating a human representative for said procurement purpose.

324. A method as recited by claim 223, further comprising the step of charging the customer a predetermined fee for initiating said procurement process.

325. A method as recited by claim 223, further comprising the step of adding additional costs incurred for conducting said procurement process to the price of the product or service.

326. A method as recited by claim 223, further comprising the step of customizing the product by gift wrapping or applying a monogram or by packaging the product with other product(s) and selling it as a product package.

327. A method as recited by claim 326, further comprising the step of providing other products in the package at no cost by giving them away as gifts or awarding them in connection a purchase program in which buyer purchases one product and gets one free.

328. A program as recited by claim 327, further configured so that other products in said package are procured from the same vendor.

329. A method as recited by claim 327, further comprising the step of procuring other products in the package from different vendors.
330. A method as recited by claim 223, further comprising the step of preventing a customer from bargaining for a predetermined amount of time to procure substantially the same product that customer declined to purchase.
331. A method as recited by claim 223, further comprising the step of permitting the buyer to bargain for substantially the same product that buyer declined to purchase, said permission being granted after expiration of a predetermined time period, provided that the product is still available.
332. A method as recited by claim 223, further comprising the step of preventing the system from selling to buyer substantially the same product at a price that the buyer has previously declined, thereby causing buyer to repeat the bargaining process ab initio.
333. A method as recited by claim 223, further comprising the step of preventing customer from logging on to the program or bargaining or using an extant account if the customer has been found to have disobeyed the terms and conditions of the registration agreement that the customer agreed to accept at the time of registration.
334. An apparatus for conducting the sale of a product through bargaining, comprising:
- a. a processor;
 - b. a network interface
 - c. a memory;
 - d. a data storage device;
 - e. an operating system;
 - f. a database management system;

- g. a database;
- h. the program recited by claim 112; and
- i. a high bandwidth connection to the Internet.

335. An apparatus as recited by claim 334, wherein said processor is further operative
 5 with said program to function as a web-server communicating with buyers and sellers
 using a communication mode selected from the group consisting of on-line, off-line
 and real-time.

336. An apparatus as recited by claim 334, wherein said processor is further operative
 with the program to process a plurality of requests from buyers and/or sellers.

337. An apparatus as recited by claim 334, further configured to store in said database all
 10 data related to buyers, sellers, transactions, responses, bargain prices, and bargain
 deals for use in connection with database operations.

338. An apparatus as recited by claim 334, further configured to provide an interface
 means enabling buyers and sellers to access the products and/or services available
 15 through the system for sale, said interface comprising a Web-browser.

339. An apparatus as recited by claim 334, wherein the processor is further operative with
 the program to enable buyers and sellers to input data related to the bargain process.

340. An apparatus as recited by claim 334, wherein said processor is further operative
 with said program to be implemented on a distributed network.

20 341. An apparatus as recited by claim 340, wherein the said distributed network comprises
 the Internet and said interface comprises a Web browser.

342. An apparatus as recited by claim 340, wherein the processor cooperates with said
 program to (a) enable buyers to register by agreeing to the terms and conditions of
 the system; (b) enable buyers to submit a buyer profile containing preselected

information about said buyers; and (c) enable buyers to login to the system and bargain for goods and/or services.

343. An apparatus as recited by claim 342, wherein the processor is further operative with the program to issue a unique membership identification and password to a buyer or a seller registering with the system.

344. An apparatus as recited by claim 334, wherein the processor is further operative with the program to register a seller by asking for seller information, storing it in a secure database and issuing to a seller a unique membership identification number and password.

345. An apparatus as recited by claim 342, wherein the processor is further operative with the program to authenticate the buyer and/or seller to use a service provided by the system program.

346. An apparatus as recited by claim 342, wherein the processor is further operative with the program to permit a buyer or a seller register at no cost or for a predetermined fee.

347. An apparatus as recited by claim 334, wherein the processor is further operative with the program to provide buyer with preselected product information, including a list of products available for purchase through the system, product prices and relative information concerning products, said preselected product information being provided after buyer logs on to the system by inputting buyer's membership ID and password.

348. An apparatus as recited by claim 334, wherein the processor is further operative with the program to receive from a remote buyer a purchase request comprising (a) a purchase offer, and (b) a payment identifier specifying a financial account from

which funds are appointed to be paid for purchase of a product or service under conditions meeting buyer requirements.

349. An apparatus as recited by claim 334, wherein the processor is further operative with the program to initiate the use of a financial account to effect payment from the buyer.

350. An apparatus as recited by claim 334, wherein the processor is further operative with the program to receive payment from the buyer through an electronic settlement system, and said settlement system comprises electronic fund transfer, digital cash, electronic cash and a credit card system selected from the group consisting of credit card and debit card

351. An apparatus as recited by claim 342, wherein the processor is further operative with the program to receive a purchaser offer from the buyer comprising information elements including product quantity, product quality, purchase date, purchase price, payment terms, date of delivery, pick-up location and delivery location of said product or services.

352. An apparatus as recited by claim 351, wherein the processor is further operative with the program to notify the buyer that said purchaser offer is accepted and buyer has entered into a legally binding contract with the system.

353. An apparatus as recited by claim 351, wherein the processor is further operative with the program (a) to generate a bargain price in response to a purchase offer by the buyer, and (b) to transmit said bargain price to the buyer.

354. An apparatus as recited by claim 353, wherein said bargain price response includes an expiration date and notification that said bargain price is revocable by the system at any time prior to said expiration date.

355. An apparatus as recited by claim 351, wherein the system bargain offer includes notification that said offer expires if it is not accepted within a predetermined time period, and that said offer can be withdrawn by the system without notice prior to expiration of said preselected time period.
- 5 356. An apparatus as recited by claim 351, wherein said processor is further operative with said program to accord buyer the right to withdraw said bargain offer after acceptance by the system provided that the buyer pays a specified penalty to the system.
- 10 357. An apparatus as recited by claim 351, wherein the processor is further operative with the program to notify the buyer that the bargain offer has lapped if the bargain offer expires without acceptance.
358. An apparatus as recited by claim 351, wherein the processor is further operative with the program to collect payment for the purchase from the buyer.
- 15 359. An apparatus as recited by claim 351, wherein the processor is further operative with the program to place payment collected from the buyer in an escrow account.
360. An apparatus as recited by claim 351, wherein the processor is further operative with the program to notify seller about the sale of seller's product.
361. An apparatus as recited by claim 351, wherein the processor is further operative with the program to transfer payment to the seller.
- 20 362. An apparatus as recited by claim 334, wherein the processor is further operative with the program to communicate with the buyer without identifying the seller.
363. An apparatus as recited by claim 334, further configured to communicate with the seller without identifying the buyer.

364. An apparatus for electronically making a binding contract between a buyer and a seller having a processor , a network interface, a memory, a data storage device, an operating system, a database management system, a database, a program as recited by claim 222 , and a high bandwidth connection to the Internet; the process comprising the steps of:

- a. receiving a purchase offer from the buyer containing a buyer request;
- b. said purchase order containing a payment identifier specifying the financial account from which funds may be paid for a purchase meeting criteria set by the buyer; and
- c. notifying the buyer concerning acceptance or rejection of said purchase offer.

365. An apparatus as recited by claim 364, wherein the processor is further operative with the program to receive payment through a credit card.

366. An apparatus as recited by claim 364, wherein the processor is further operative with the program to initiate the use of a financial account for effecting payment of said funds from buyer.

367. An apparatus as recited by claim 364, wherein the processor is further operative with the program to receive a purchase offer from the buyer comprising plural buyer request elements, including product quantity, product quality, purchase price, purchase date, payment terms, date of delivery, pick-up location and delivery location of said product or services.

368. An apparatus for processing the sale of a product which comprises a processor, a network interface, a memory, a data storage device, an operating system, a database management system, a database, the program recited by claim 112, a high bandwidth

connection to the Internet, a common port for obtaining a purchase offer for the product from the buyer and a payment identifier from which payment for the product may be made, the processor being further configured to present the buyer with a plurality of available products and the buyer being enabled by said system to bargain for at least one product selection.

369. An apparatus as recited by claim 368, where the processor is further operative with the program to provide a channel of communication between said buyer and said seller without revealing their identities.
370. An apparatus as recited by claim 368, where the processor is further operative with the program to provide incentives to the buyer for making said product selection.
371. An apparatus as recited by claim 368, where the processor further comprises means operative with the program to bargain for the product selected by the buyer during a bargaining process adapted to arrive at an acceptable bargain price.
372. An apparatus as recited by claim 368, where the processor further comprises means operative with the program for (a) accepting the bargain price; (b) notifying the buyer about the acceptance; and (c) drawing payment for said product from the payment identifier.
373. An apparatus for processing the sale of a package of component items, comprising: a processor, a network interface, a memory, a data storage device an operating system, a database management system, a database, the program in claim 112, a high speed bandwidth connection to the Internet, and a communications port to receive a purchase offer from the customer containing his requirements for each of said component items of said package, and a bargain price for said package.

374. An apparatus as recited by claim 373, wherein the processor further comprises means operative with the program to deconstruct a package purchase offer into a plurality of component items and to determine whether each of the component items of said package purchase offer can be accepted or rejected and bind the buyer to purchase the package if the system accepts said bargain price for the package.
375. An apparatus as recited by claim 373, wherein the processor further comprises means operative with the program to receive a purchase offer for each component in the package.
376. An apparatus as recited by claim 373, wherein the processor further comprises means operative with the program for initiating the use of a payment identifier to collect funds, upon acceptance of a bargain offer.
377. An apparatus as recited by claim 373, wherein the processor further comprises means operative with the program to calculate a price for each component based on the percentage of the market value of the component to the market value of all component items in said package.
378. An apparatus as recited by claim 373, wherein the bargain offer for each component in the package and the bargain price for the whole package is generated by the system and sent to the buyer with notice that buyer acceptance must be effected during a preselected time period.
379. An apparatus as recited by claim 378, wherein the processor further comprises means operative with the program so that the bargain offer response generated by the system includes the total price for the product or service, a portion of the total price being reserved as margin.

380. An apparatus as recited by claim 378, wherein the processor further comprises means operative with the program to cause the processor to decrease the price of at least one component of the package, or the whole package, to thereby generate a new bargain offer response having increased acceptability to the buyer.

5 381. An apparatus as recited by claim 378, wherein the processor further comprises means operative with the program for decreasing the price of at least one component of the package, or decreases the price of said package, without disclosing the price reduction of the component items in the package, thereby arriving at a new counter bargain offer having increased propensity for acceptance by the buyer and the system.

382. An apparatus as recited by claim 378, wherein the processor further comprises means operative with the program for binding buyer to purchase the package of components if the bargain price is accepted by the system and the price of the component items is not disclose to the buyer.

15 383. An apparatus for facilitating a transaction between a buyer and at least one seller, the apparatus having a processor, a network interface, a memory, a data storage device, an operating system, a database management system, a database, the program in claim 112, and a high bandwidth connection to the Internet, and the transaction comprising the steps of : (a) inputting into computer a purchase offer which includes information about the product and a bargain offer which includes an offer price, (b) inputting into a computer the payment mode identifier associated with the bargain offer, and (c) transmitting each of said purchase offer, said bargain offer and said payment mode identifier to said system.

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384. An apparatus having a processor, a network interface, a memory, a data storage device, an operating system, a database management system, a database, the program in claim 112, and a high bandwidth connection to the Internet, said apparatus being adapted to receive a bargain offer containing the price offered by the buyer for the product and to perform the steps which comprise: (a) validating the offer, (b) determining availability of the product, and (c) storing information concerning bargain offer validity and said product in said database.

385. An apparatus as recited by claim 383, said processor being further operative with said program to receive a bargain offer from a buyer, and generate an acknowledgement response upon validating the offer, said validation being carried out by a process comprising the steps of:

- a. determining whether the bargain offer for the product has expired;
- b. determining whether the product is available; and
- c. determining whether a predetermined dollar amount is available in said payment mode identifier.

386. An apparatus having a processor, a network interface, a memory, a data storage device, an operating system, a database management system, a database, the program recited by claim 112, and a high bandwidth connection to the Internet, said apparatus being used for processing the sale and purchase of items and said processor being further operative with said program to receive a bargain offer from the buyer, including (a) conditions for purchase of a product or service, and (b) a payment identifier, thereby defining said bargain offer.

387. An apparatus as recited by claim 386, wherein the processor is further operative with the program to receive a bargain offer from the seller including conditions for sale of

the product, details about the product, a seller price for the product and a payment identifier specifying mode of payment.

388. An apparatus as recited by claim 386, wherein the processor is further operative with the program to identify the buyer from which the bargain offer is received by asking the buyer for a member ID and password.

389. An apparatus as recited by claim 386, wherein the processor is further operative with the program to query each seller to obtain therefrom a unique member ID and password for use in identifying a seller from which a bargain offer is received.

390. An apparatus as recited by claim 386, wherein the processor is further operative with the program to verify the legitimacy / authenticity / condition of the product, and the pricing of the product being listed by the seller, said verification being accomplished by verification means, which comprise:

- a. means for issuing an authenticity certificate from an authorized appraiser;
- b. means for evaluating product price based on input from said authorized appraiser;
- c. means for checking said certification at the time of pick-up or delivery; and
- d. means for checking the condition of the product appointed for inspection at said time of pick-up or delivery.

391. An apparatus as recited by claim 390, said processor being further operative with said program to effect the evaluation and appraisal of said product based on input by an authorized appraiser nominated by said system.

392. An apparatus as recited by claim 390, said processor being further operative with said program to effect payment by seller of costs for the evaluation, said evaluation costs being excluded from product price.

393. An apparatus as recited by claim 390, said processor being further operative with said program to effect payment by said system of costs for the evaluation to its nominated appraiser, said evaluation cost being included in product price.

394. An apparatus as recited by claim 390, further comprising:

- a. means for initiating legal action or for imposing a penalty against a seller that fails to produce a product at the time of pick-up;
- b. means for preventing payment of said seller;
- c. means for charging a predetermined penalty against said seller;
- d. means for blacklisting said seller;
- e. means for canceling said seller's registration in accordance with seller's registration agreement.

395. An apparatus as recited by claim 390, wherein the processor is further operative with the program to stop payment to the seller for sale of the product if seller fails to produce an authentication certificate or produces a false certificate at time of pick-up.

396. An apparatus as recited by claim 390, wherein the processor is further operative with the program to validate the received bargain offer signal from the buyer and/or seller, thereby determining whether the received offer signal meets predetermined validation criteria.

397. An apparatus as recited by claim 396, wherein the processor is further operative with the program to process the received bargain offer from the buyer and/or seller, in response to a determination during validation that said received bargain offer meets predetermined criteria.

398. An apparatus as recited by claim 396, wherein the processor is further operative with the program to initiate the bargain process, said processor having means for

continuously generating bargain prices for the buyer, until a point is reached where either an acceptable price is arrived at, or the buyer stops bargaining, or the product becomes unavailable, or the bargain price generated by the system reaches a preselected limit, or said buyer or said seller runs out of bonus chances or does not request additional chances, or said predetermined time period allotted for bargaining has expired..

399. An apparatus as recited by claim 398, wherein the processor comprises means operative with the program to stop the bargaining process in response to a request from the buyer and/or seller without charging a penalty or a fee.
400. An apparatus as recited by claim 398, wherein the processor further comprises means operative with the program to accept the bargaining offer containing buyer's price offer after validating that the offer meets predetermined criteria.
401. An apparatus as recited by claim 398, the processor further comprising means operative with the program for processing an acceptance received from the buyer after validating that the bargain offer meet predetermined criteria, storing the validation offer in a database.
402. An apparatus as recited by claim 398, wherein the processor further comprises means operative with the program to (a) transmit a notification to the buyer indicating that his bargain offer is less than certain minimum predetermined offer criteria; (b) request buyer to send another bargain offer; or (c) quit the bargaining process; or (d) to follow a bargaining recommendation provided by a "Bargain Guru".
403. An apparatus as recited by claim 398, wherein the processor further comprises means operative with the program to permit buyer to (a) request free chances, or (b) buy more chances at a predetermined chance purchase price, or (c) redeem purchase

points to buy more chances to bargain after the system program has stopped bargaining for a particular product or service.

404. An apparatus as recited by claim 403, wherein the processor further comprises means operative with the program to permit buyer and/or seller to use at least one bargain chance provided by the system to continue bargaining until all chances issued to the buyer and seller have been used or a bargain price is accepted.

405. An apparatus as recited by claim 403, wherein the processor further comprises means operative with the program for permitting buyer to use at least one bargain chance provided by the system to continue bargaining until all chances provided by the system have been used, said buyer having an election to (a) request free chances or (b) to purchase additional chances for a predetermined chance purchase price, or (c) to redeem purchase points applicable toward purchase of additional chances; or (d) to accept the system bargain price; or (e) to follow a purchase recommendation provided by a "Bargain Guru".

406. An apparatus as recited by claim 403, wherein the processor further comprises means operative with the program for indicating to the buyer that, so long as the product or service is still available, the bargain price generated by the buyer's bargain offer will remain active and acceptable for a predetermined time period.

407. An apparatus as recited by claim 403, wherein the processor further comprises means operative with the program to periodically notify the buyer and/or seller concerning the status of shipment in transit said notification being provided (a) after completion of a transaction, and (b) periodically, in response to a buyer or seller request after purchase of said product.

408. An apparatus as recited by claim 403, wherein the processor further comprises means operative with the program for initiating the use of a payment identifier to collect funds.

409. An apparatus as recited by claim 334, wherein the processor further comprises means operative with the program for bargaining or trading with other extant systems, said bargaining or trading being conducted on behalf of the buyer and being carried out at no cost, for a predetermined fee.

410. An apparatus as recited by claim 334, wherein the processor further comprises means operative with the program for issuing licenses to other extant systems or customers to use the system for selling their products and /or services.

411. An apparatus as recited by claim 334, wherein the processor further comprises means operative with the program for transferring the buyer to a toll free number to continue bargaining for the selected product, said transfer being initiated upon request of the buyer.

412. An apparatus as recited by claim 334, wherein the processor further comprises means operative with the program for permitting buyers to obtain wild card discounts or special promotions from the system using a procedure comprising: (a) purchase of wild cards or special promotions containing said discounts; (b) receipt of system awarded wild cards or special promotions containing said discounts for participating in special bargain deals; (c) receipt of randomly awarded system wild cards or special promotions; and (d) receipt of wild cards or special promotions awarded to privileged customers by surprise pop-up messages or by instant messaging, or by means of a "Bargain Guru"..

413. An apparatus as recited by claim 412, wherein the processor further comprises means operative with the program for permitting the buyer to use said wild card discounts or special promotions to buy bargain chances or to obtain a preselected percentage reduction from the final bargain offer as specified in a wild card discount or special promotion pop-up message or by instant messaging, or by means of a "Bargain Guru".
414. An apparatus as recited by claim 412, wherein the processor further comprises means operative with the program to provide a graphic display such as a "Bargometer" or a "Bargainmeter" adapted to graphically depict a probability for system acceptance of buyer's offer for purchase of the product.
415. An apparatus as recited by claim 412, wherein the processor further comprises means operative with the program to award purchase incentives selected from the group consisting of: (a) bonus chances, made available on the purchase of products and/or services or in response to buyer's request for free bonus chances or to encourage timely payment by customers; (b) purchase points, provided in consideration of the purchase of products.
416. An apparatus as recited by claim 412, wherein the processor further comprises means operative with the program to permit buyer to accumulate a certain predetermined number of points, and to use the accumulated points to obtain additional discounts, offers or enhanced bargaining opportunities, in accordance with said registration agreement.
417. An apparatus as recited by claim 412, wherein the processor further comprises means operative with the program for (a) providing at least one pop-up surprise special message during bargaining, said surprise message according an additional discount

on the product or a special / promotional offer, such as “buy one, get one free”, with respect to said product.

418. An apparatus as recited by claim 334, wherein the processor further comprises means operative with the program for selling available products using an on-line, retail sales
5 format.

419. An apparatus as recited by claim 334, further configured to place items on auction or to sell items by procured using a procedure involving bids taken from a plurality of buyer, wherein the product is sold to the buyer with the highest bid.

420. An apparatus as recited by claim 334, wherein the processor further comprises means operative with the program for selling items procured using a procedure involving
10 bids taken from a plurality of buyers, wherein the product is sold to the buyer that submits the highest bid.

421. An apparatus as recited by claim 420, wherein the processor further comprises means operative with the program to place the price on hold for a predetermined amount of time upon the request of a buyer, said holding of bargain sale price being effectuated
15 either with or without a fee.

422. An apparatus as recited by claim 420, wherein the processor further comprises means operative with the program to prevent the product from being sold in the event that said bidder responds to said system after expiration of a predetermined time.

20 423. An apparatus as recited by claim 420, wherein the processor further comprises means operative with the program for permitting the buyer to withdraw a bid after acceptance by the system with or without payment of a specified penalty to the system.

424. An apparatus as recited by claim 334, wherein the processor further comprises means operative with the program for purchasing and /or selling goods and services on a worldwide basis, said purchase or sale being accomplished: (a) through the system's own Internet website; or (b) by franchising the system; or (c) by licensing the business module; or (d) through affiliate programs with other extant business systems or websites.

425. An apparatus as recited by claim 334, wherein the processor further comprises means operative with the program for purchasing and /or selling goods and services on a local and regional basis, said sale being accomplished: (a) through the system's own Internet website; or (b) by franchising the system; or (c) by licensing the business module; or (d) through affiliate programs with other extant business systems or websites.

426. An apparatus comprising: a processor, a network interface, a memory, a data storage device, an operating system, a database management system, a database, the program recited in claim 112, and a high bandwidth connection to the Internet, said apparatus configured to act on behalf of a customer comprised of a buyer or a seller and perform a bargaining process comprising the steps of:

- a. generating a bargain offer proposed by said customer;
- b. accepting or rejecting a counter offer proposed to the program for the product;
- c. consulting with the customer throughout the bargaining process to obtain customer consent and customer preferences; and

- d. electing from among choices available to the customer on customer's behalf, to optimally use customer's available resources to arrive at a final bargain price.

427. An apparatus as recited by claim 426, wherein the processor comprises means
5 operative with the program to provide comparative quotes of a product appointed for purchase by a buyer to obtain a preferred deal for said buyer, said means for providing said comparative quotes including means for (i) locating information or prices from different extant systems or websites that sell substantially the same product, and (ii) providing to a customer comparative quotes of a specific product
10 appointed for purchase through said Internet Bargaining system.

428. An apparatus as recited by claim 427, wherein the processor comprises means
operative with the program for (a) countering the final bargain price to seek a bargain
price adjustment based on a customer found price, from another website or existing
system, which has been substantiated to be lower than the final bargain price; and (b)
15 further bargaining on a customer's behalf for a bargain price adjustment that results in a price equal to or less than the found price for substantially the same product or service.

429. An apparatus as recited by claim 334, wherein the processor comprises means
operative with the program for providing links to a site that offers a lower price for a
20 particular product or service, in the event that the said system cannot provide substantially the same price or a lower price through its vendors.

430. An apparatus as recited by claim 334, wherein the processor comprises means
operative with the program for using cartoon characters to assist people with

bargaining, said cartoon characters being adapted to provide information from the database using a textual dialogue or a voice dialogue.

431. An apparatus as recited by claim 334, wherein the processor comprises means operative with the program for organizing the information provided by the said cartoon characters into categories, comprising: (a) major characteristics of the product, (b) bargain price, (c) purchasing strategies that can be useful for the buyer, (d) complementary remarks for the buyer to congratulate buyer upon completion of a successful bargain and encourage buyer to participate in additional bargains, (e) purchasing assistance, (f) bargaining assistance, and (g) product selection assistance.
432. An apparatus as recited by claim 334, wherein the processor comprises means operative with the program for providing a website having a box for comments and feedback from customers, said box including a plurality of feedback categories, including: (a) whether customers find the same product at decreased rates on other extant systems and websites, (b) customer complaints, and (c) customer compliments.
433. An apparatus as recited by claim 427, wherein the processor comprises means operative with the program for the purpose of procuring a product or service on behalf of a customer at no extra cost if the product or service is not listed on the system website or if it is offered on said other extant system or website at a lower price, said product procurement being carried out by (a) bargaining for the product or service; or (b) purchasing product at auction; or (c) purchasing the product or service at retail from vendors or other websites or other extant systems at buyer's request.
434. An apparatus as recited by claim 427, wherein the processor comprises means operative with the program for designating a human representative for said product procurement purpose.

435. An apparatus as recited by claim 427, wherein the processor comprises means operative with the program for charging the customer a predetermined fee for procuring said product on customer's behalf.
436. An apparatus as recited by claim 427, wherein the processor comprises means
5 operative with the program for adding said fee to the price of the product for bargaining on behalf of a customer.
437. An apparatus as recited by claim 334, wherein the processor comprises means operative with the program for customizing the product by (a) gift-wrapping; or (b) applying a monogram to said product; or (c) combining the product with other
10 product(s) and selling a package composed of the combined products.
438. An apparatus as recited by claim 437 wherein the processor comprises means operative with the program for awarding the other products in the package (a) as gifts, or (b) on a purchase basis wherein for each product purchased, one of the other products is awarded at no cost.
- 15 439. An apparatus as recited by claim 334, wherein the processor comprises means operative with the program for combining in said package a plurality of products and services, each of which originate from the same vendor.
440. An apparatus as recited by claim 334 where the processor comprises means operative with the program for combining in said package a plurality of products and services,
20 said products and services originating from a plurality of different vendors.
441. An apparatus as recited by claim 334, wherein the processor comprises means operative with the program for preventing a customer from bargaining for a product during a predetermined time period following a decision by said customer declining purchase of substantially the same product.

442. An apparatus as recited by claim 439, wherein the processor comprises means operative with the program for permitting a customer to bargain for a product that said customer has declined to purchase, said permission being granted after expiration of a predetermined time period, provided that substantially the same product is available.

443. An apparatus as recited by claim 334, wherein the processor comprises means operative with the program for preventing sale to a buyer of substantially the same product at a price previously declined by that buyer, to thereby cause said buyer to repeat the bargaining process.

444. An apparatus as recited by claim 334, wherein the processor comprises means operative with the program for preventing a customer from logging on to the system or bargaining or using an existing account if said customer has been blacklisted, or found to have disobeyed terms and conditions of the system that customer agreed to accept at the time of registration.

445. A system as recited by claim 9, wherein said program is adapted to enable a customer to browse a listing or details concerning available products without registering with the system.

446. A system as recited by claim 15, wherein said program is further configured to permit said customer to bargain for a product or service without using a payment identifier.

447. A system as recited by claim 15, wherein said program is further configured to require submission of a customer's authentication upon acceptance of customer's bargain offer by said system.

448. A system as recited by claim 19, wherein said program is further configured to notify the seller that said purchase offer is accepted and buyer has entered into a legally binding contract with said system.

449. A system as recited by claim 29, configured to communicate with each of buyer and seller and to communicate to each the identity of the other with or without charging a fee.

450. A system as recited by claim 31, further configured to receive a purchase offer that is not coupled or linked to a payment identifier.

451. A system as recited by claim 39, wherein said processor notifies said buyer about the acceptance and holds the product for a predetermined time period without requiring a payment identifier.

452. A system as recited by claim 451, wherein said product is held without guarantee of its availability.

453. A system as recited by claim 39, wherein said product is held without guarantee of its availability.

454. A system as recited by claim 50, wherein said payment mode identifier, though inputted, is not applied to prevent system functions.

455. A system as recited by claim 57, wherein said verification of legitimacy / authenticity / condition of said products and product pricing are not applicable to prevent product sales; products are sold on an "as is" basis; and such sales are consummated by said system without assuming responsibility therefor.

456. A system as recited by claim 58, wherein said appraiser is selected from said list by said buyer or said seller.

457. A system as recited by claim 58, wherein at least one appraiser on said list is

nominated by said buyer or said seller.

458. A system as recited by claim 92, wherein said seller is a member selected from the

group consisting of manufacturer, retailer, distributor, wholesaler and sole vendor.